

## AMONG THE TRIBES

175 The Chinese, however, did not interfere between  
622 the lairds and their tenants, and left things very  
much as they were. As long as the lairds pay  
taxes, recognise the sovereignty of China, and  
make no serious trouble, they are let alone.  
When the laird is a strong, just man, the present  
system works well; but when he is a cruel tyrant,  
as many of them are, holding practically the  
power of life and death over his retainers and  
tenants, cruel things are very often done in  
those regions.

691 It is seldom that the tenants of these lairds  
622 are engaged in litigation before the Chinese  
661 magistrates, as their landlords settle all disputes  
for them which they cannot settle among them-  
selves. This is doubtless a very good thing for  
the tenants, even though the laird may often be  
unjust in his decisions. The lairds themselves,  
however, are constantly at law with one another  
in the Chinese courts, and this is an opportunity  
for the magistrates to enrich themselves. The  
lairds are generally represented in these actions  
by their Chinese agents. It is said that very  
few of them dare enter a Chinese city because of  
the many serious and even capital charges laid  
against them in the Yamens. If they did enter  
the city of their district, they might be appre-  
hended, and in that case mercilessly squeezed.

## THE LO-LO OR NO-SU

123

Last year a laird was executed at Suei-ts'en in Kweichow, but he must have been a small one. 691 661 •

Thus there exists in north-western Kweichow and north-eastern Yunnan what is actually the feudal system. Many of the lairds own vast estates, as large as an English county, and all the people on the estate are their tenants. The lairds are all of them Black No-su, and the White No-su are their serfs or slaves. These lairds are nearly all related to one another, as they constantly intermarry for the sake of joining and enlarging their estates. A No-su heiress is always pestered and sometimes actually besieged by suitors. A laird always marries the daughter of some other laird, and as there is but a limited number of them, this constant intermarriage has doubtless contributed to the decadence of the race and to the frequency of lunacy among them. They may, and often do, have Chinese and Miao women as concubines. 564 427 581

The Miao tenants, who greatly outnumber the No-su tenants, are not slaves, but practically serfs. The soil is very poor, and any Miao, if he fancied a piece of unoccupied land, might build his hovel there and cultivate some of it. The lairds are glad to have them as tenants; the rent they pay is mostly in kind, and not by any means high. As a matter of fact, the tenants, 427